# Episode 16 - Kate Cashman - v1.mp3

**John Pratt:** [00:00:05] Hello and welcome to Tasmania Police's podcast. This is Tas Police. I'm Inspector John Pratt and I'll be your host as we chat to a wide range of Tasmanian police officers about why they joined the job and why others should too. We're coming to you today from Lutruwita, Tasmania. And before we start our conversation, I'd like to respectfully acknowledge the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the traditional owners of the land upon which we work and pay our respects to elders past and present. We recognise the Tasmanian Aboriginal people as the continuing custodians of the rich cultural heritage of Lutruwita, Tasmania.

**John Pratt:** [00:00:48] Today on the podcast, we're talking to one of our lecturers at the Tasmania Police Academy. Dr. Kate Cashman is a lecturer from the University of Tasmania. And as part of our partnership with the university, she helps to deliver evidence-based learning to our recruits and other serving officers. Kate is one member of a team who provides our recruits with all the information and skills they need to know about policing and emergency management in Tasmania. We're going to talk to Kate about some frequently asked questions that new recruits might have. And she will also be giving us some tips and tricks for those who may not have experienced university study before. Kate, it's lovely to have you here on the podcast today.

**Kate Cashman:** [00:01:23] Thank you for having me.

**John Pratt:** [00:01:24] Firstly, can you tell us a bit about your background so we can get to know you a little bit more?

**Kate Cashman:** [00:01:29] Absolutely. So I did a business and law degree and finished that in 2008 and then after travelling, had plans to go into corporate law but decided against that after many, many months of being under the African skies. So I came back and resigned from that position and started doing some criminal law research in the area of forensics. So then that led to a PhD, which, you know, I had kids during the PhD and ended up teaching a lot and that was 14 you know, I started teaching about 14 years ago and I've just been teaching the whole way through. So I came to the policing program about six years ago now from a criminal law and evidence law perspective, and that has also morphed into investigative interviewing with recruits and other serving officers as well.

**John Pratt:** [00:02:21] So if we look at the police academy and recruiting now, can you just explain to us how the partnership between the University of Tasmania and Tasmania Police actually works?

**Kate Cashman:** [00:02:30] So the University of Tasmania and Tasmania Police have had a relationship for over 20 years from a research perspective, but from a training perspective it's been shorter than that. But it has always been based on the support of what Tasmania Police does from an academic perspective, knowing that there are elements of study like law based subjects, criminology based subjects, working with vulnerable people based subjects that would be of benefit for recruits to learn. And over the years that's developed into supporting recruits during their recruit training with really relevant study and teaching research and writing skills. But also that agreement or that relationship has further developed into a greater sense of professionalisation in the police workforce. So now we also teach into a more professional honours program as well.

**John Pratt:** [00:03:26] Yeah, so the partnership's definitely a fantastic one. And we do hear many positive stories from recruits and indeed people that are in service. Can you tell us for a recruit how much study is actually involved when they go through the academy and what sort of subjects are covered?

**Kate Cashman:** [00:03:40] Absolutely. So it's quite a special way to study. And if anyone's ever done university study before, it's essentially not like that. So over the course of the full recruit training process, only about three weeks worth of time will be allocated, at this stage, to university training. And we're always adapting and tailoring the way we deliver the program based on what Tasmania Police needs. But at this stage it is about three weeks total over the course of those many months that recruits are training and subjects involve things like the law, subject, criminology, policing, vulnerable people, managerialism and ethics. And for almost all of those subjects, they're taught in relationship with a Tasmania Police teaching member of staff. And that's to make sure that we have that real relevance to policing practice. But the law subject is the only one that's taught exclusively by UTAS.

**John Pratt:** [00:04:41] You touched on professionalism as part of one of the benefits that our recruits get from the UTAS study. What other benefits do they get once they've graduated?

**Kate Cashman:** [00:04:49] Obviously, at the end of particular parts of the program, you come out with an associate degree moving towards a degree, but you also get taught about writing well, writing reflectively, also analysing, doing research, looking at things from both sides and learning skills in terms of how to communicate with vulnerable people in particular ways and skills around interviewing. I teach interviewing to the recruits and other serving officers and I always say that the skills that you'll learn in that unit you'll be able to use with your kids when you are asking how school was if you don't just want a one word answer. So there are skills that will support you in policing there, skills that will support you in life, but also skills that will support you on and in the job, whether it's writing files, putting together things for the court, etcetera.

**John Pratt:** [00:05:43] So some people that we have applying to join Tasmania Police may be a little bit intimidated by the thought of having to do university study in the academy. What advice can you give to people who may not have studied for some considerable time?

**Kate Cashman:** [00:05:55] I absolutely understand that that is something that might seem quite scary. And I absolutely want to reassure people that if they're coming in, they're doing something that is very different to the traditional model of university. There is a lot more support through the Tasmania Police program than you would get if you were a regular member of the university outside of the recruit training program. But also what I say to recruits when they first come into the program that I think is really important is that everybody that's coming into this program is a beginner. Even if people have done university study before, I will always encourage them to come at this with a complete beginner's mindset because the way we teach it's very different to every other type of university study or program. But also that we've been supporting people through this program for a long time. And I have seen people come in utterly terrified of the university program who've left feeling incredibly proud of themselves because they've been given the support, but also they've worked really hard and developed new skills to come into working through their studies in a way that astounds even them. So there is not one type of person that is suited to university study. We know this, and we also know that it can support you on the job. But I am absolutely certain that we can support any person who has a deep desire to be a police officer to get them through their university study.

**John Pratt:** [00:07:28] I'm sure that while you've been working with recruits here at the Tasmania Police Academy, you've heard plenty of myths about how university study is for our recruits. Are you able to dispel some of those myths?

**Kate Cashman:** [00:07:38] Absolutely. So firstly that there are lots of essay writing tasks. Now, we always joke, I always joke that you know, marking lots of essays is almost as unpleasant as writing essays. We don't structure our writing in a way that is really strict. So one of the myths is that, Oh gosh, I'm going to have to do university study, I'm going to have to write essays. That's not the case. We do have ways to support you, to learn to write the way that we want you to. So I always say to people, I will explain and support you to learn to do the assessments that we want you to do. You're not expected to know how to do that when you first come in. Some of the other myths is that, you know, this, people are really attached to, oh, but I'm just not that clever, and I'm not good with bookwork and stories about themselves as students. And I also want to dispel that myth because every single person that has been through this program is a student with their own strengths and their own skills, and real-world and life skills are actually so useful when it comes to the type of university study that you do when you walk through the door at the police academy. And so people might think that they don't have what it takes to be a good student. But I can assure you that all of the life experiences that people have are actually a real asset. Particularly to the type of university study that we do. So I think that's another big myth that you have to be super smart to do this.

**John Pratt:** [00:09:10] Okay, one of the myths that I've certainly heard is that the UTAS component is basically bolted onto the side of a recruit training program for lack of a better description, when in fact the UTAS component is intrinsic with it. It is essential for the training of a recruit. Not only that, it's the start of the investigative pathway. If a recruit should choose to follow that once they graduate and it's also the start of the promotional pathway. Can you explain a bit about that for us?

**Kate Cashman:** [00:09:34] So the university program is constantly evolving. Just like policing, we always make sure that what we are teaching is not only relevant, but also that it changes when the needs of police recruits change when there are relevant cases that happen around the world that we talk about in terms of policing, we bring those into the classroom. So our teaching is something that is always evolving, but it's also something that we talk to Tasmania police officers about to make sure that it's really relevant and not just bolted on, as you say, John, to the side. It is intrinsic in the promotions pathway and some people might say, Oh, why do I have to do uni if I already know I don't want to promote. But I always say to people, You never know where this career is going to take you and you don't know what skills you might want to develop. So if you want to go down that investigations pathway and be a detective, we have a really structured support and study process to help you with that and a lot of that is around reflective practice. So to do that, you need that university study as part of the recruit training process, and it starts to prepare you in a staged approach for that. So to study that you do when you're an in-service officer and the promotional pathway is also part of this real movement around the world, of which Tasmania is very much at the forefront of the professionalisation of policing. And in order to be defined as a profession, there is that requirement for higher education and the option for further study if people want it.

**John Pratt:** [00:11:11] So your role here at the Academy sees you deal with every recruit that passes through here. Can you tell us about some of the most common questions you receive from the recruits?

**Kate Cashman:** [00:11:19] Oh yeah, absolutely. So the common questions might be around what is expected of me in this piece of assessment. So I talk to people about all the types of assessments that a lot of the other staff will give as well. So we're across each other's subjects. So are the common questions 'Why do I have to do this?' is a common one. And look, you know, I get that people may not understand the relationship yet and, you know, in terms of it's only been the last couple of decades that there has been that relationship. And so I really like answering that question about the benefits that it will bring to people, those extra skills that it will bring, how much writing they'll do, you know, and how it will help support them. Other common questions actually often revolve around, well 'if I have an area that I'm really interested in, once I finish at the academy, is there a way that I can do some study or some research around that area?' So if people are out on the job and they're finding that there's an area they really like or that they see that they can make a difference, there's ways that they can actually then come back into the university program as part of what we call professional honours. And obviously that's a little while away for recruits, but they want to know that there's that flexibility there for them to actually study things that they're interested in some day, maybe not so much in the recruit training program, which is designed for them, but there's flexibility for later. So I get those questions a lot.

**John Pratt:** [00:12:48] So as we come to the end of our chat today, I'd like to know, do you have any words of advice for anyone thinking about joining Tasmania Police from a study perspective?

**Kate Cashman:** [00:12:57] Absolutely. I would say that the most important thing is not to make any assumptions about yourself as a student, because I have and our team has supported people who haven't been through school for 30 years to people who have done higher education already, to those who are fresh out of school and never did any pre-tertiary subjects. So don't make any assumptions about who you're going to be as a student because you don't know that yet. And I can guarantee that we can support you regardless of your background. The other thing that I would say to people is that you can do hard things and this might be something that is a challenging component, at least initially in the recruit training program. But, you know, it will make you even more proud of the experience that you've had here in recruit training, knowing that that you've learnt these other set of skills that will really help you, not just in your work but in your life as well, and don't hesitate, you know, we'll support you and find ways to tailor what you need.

**John Pratt:** [00:14:00] From a personal perspective, I had a solid 20-odd years out of school before I entered the university part of the promotional system, and I can certainly say there was plenty of help there to help me through that. And I certainly did learn a lot of skills as we went through it. I think it's fair to say that policing does involve a lot of writing, writing of reports, writing of letters and the skills that you do learn out of the university component go a long way to helping with that. Kate, thanks very much for joining me today. It's been great to talk about what our recruits can expect from their university study.

**Kate Cashman:** [00:14:31] Thank you. My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

**John Pratt:** [00:14:38] That's it for today's episode. I hope you've enjoyed it so far on This is Tas Police. We've chatted to our commissioner, Donna Adams, our recruitment services team, some new recruits, and we've experienced a day in the life of a constable on the beat in Launceston. We've also heard from an investigator of a long term missing persons case and we've jumped aboard one of our police vessels and heard what it's like to work for marine and rescue services. There have been some interesting and inspiring conversations from people who have experienced everything Tas Police has to offer. In our next episode of this is Tas Police, we are talking to a police officer who used to be a dolphin trainer. That's right. Constable Nikki McIntosh swapped her blue-finned friends for a blue Tasmania police uniform back in 2014. We'll be chatting to Nikki about how that came about and how she managed to navigate such an interesting career change.